DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 274 047 EA 018 807

AUTHOR Lezotte, Lawrence W.
TITLE School Effectiveness: Reflections and Future Directions.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986). Printed on colored paper.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *Change Strategies; Educational Change; *Educational History; *Educational Improvement; Educational Objectives; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Needs Assessment; *School Based Management; *School Effectiveness
IDENTIFIERS *Effective Schools Research; Excellence in Education

ABSTRACT

Four critical time periods offer a sense of where the Effective Schools Movement has been, and where it appears to be headed. The period of 1966 to 1976 marked the beginning of descriptive studies of individual effective schools. During the period of 1976 to 1980 a new coalition was formed between many of the Effective Schools researchers and school-based practitioners for school improvement. The 1980 to 1983 period was critical because the new excellence movement began to sweep the country like a storm. The period of 1983 to 1986, although marked by the death of Ron Edmonds in 1983, found researchers and practitioners operating within a loose network to assert the value of the Effective Schools research and concepts. The Effective Schools-based school improvement model is characterized by a primary focus on the improvement of both teaching and learning, a major emphasis on documented outcomes for students, and analysis of evidence by disaggregation of data to monitor for quality and equity. The process model for school improvement, based on Effective Schools research, focuses on the single school as the strategic unit for change; involves collaborative efforts of the principal, teachers, staff, and school community; and requires a comprehensive needs assessment and examination of research on effective schools and effective teaching. Five references are appended. (MLF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED274047

SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lawrence W. Lezotte

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Prepared by

Lawrence W. Lezotte

Michigan State University

Prepared for

The Annual Meeting of

The American Educational Research Association

San Francisco

April, 1986

EA 018 807

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Preface

I want to thank Bill Gauthier for his gracious introduction. I feel especially privileged to have this opportunity to share my thoughts with those of you who are active memebers of the School Effectiveness Special Interest Group.

I would like to dedicate these remarks to Ron Edmonds, whose contribution to clarifying and advancing the Effective Schools vision represents for us a classic example of true leadership; to those Effective Schools researchers, many of whom are here today, whose tireless efforts are adding to and further solidifying the Effective Schools knowledge base; and finally, to those thousands of teachers and administrators who are utilizing the concepts of the Research to make their schools even more effective.

The invitation to prepare a set of remarks that are reflective, helping define an historical perspective, and also, projective, looking toward a future research agenda, is exciting indeed.

I have decided to focus on four "critical time periods" that seem to offer, perhaps, a clear sense of where the Effective Schools Movement has been, and where it appears to be headed. The four periods are: 1966-76; 1976-1980; 1980-1983; and 1983 to the present.

The early history of what we now call the Effective Schools Movement was absorbed with framing the vision of the effective school. Those of you who heard Ron Edmonds talk about this early period know the emphasis that was placed on the Equal Educational Opportunity Study (1966) of James Coleman and his associates, as well as on the Jencks, et al, work culminiating in the document Inequality: A Reassessment of Home and Family Background (1972).

Today it is quite fashionable to talk metaphorically. If we were to return to the early works of Coleman and Jencks and ask them to share their metaphor of the public school, I wonder what they would describe? Surely, they would call upon metaphors which convey a sense that schools are passive partners in the maintenance of the social status quo.

Given this benign role, is it any wonder that the relative status of U.S. schools would decline significantly during the ensuing years?

However, even though the dominant view that "schools don't and can't make a difference" occupied center stage in the educational discourse during this period, a new act was being formed in the wings--the concept of the effective school. It was during this period that the first generation of effective schools studies were being completed by people such as Brookover, Weber, Austin, Madden, Lawson, and Sweet, to mention but a few. For these researchers and others associated with this line of inquiry, the metaphor of the school was clearly different. These descriptive studies viewed schools as institutions that were neither passive nor oriented toward the status quo. In fact, researchers were able to cite cases where individual schools exemplified a promising model, an approach where virtually all pupils were successfully learning what it was that these schools wanted them to know and to be able to do. Most importantly, these schools were achieving this outcome, even though large proportions of their students were socioeconomically poor and disadvantaged.

As we leave the 1966-1976 period, we are assured that, though few in number, some schools do indeed work effectively.

The question then became, "Can schools change and become more effective?" Educators could now conceive a vision of what might be, and were able to identify the places where the intended goals were already being realized.

1976-1980

During this crucial period, a signifcant transition occurred around the Effective Schools Research. A new coalition was formed between many of the Effective Schools researchers and school-based practitioners for the "absurd" purpose of school improvement. It was during this period that many of the well-recognized programs of school improvement, based upon the Effective Schools Research, were launched.

Of great historical importance was Ron Edmonds' liason with New York City for the purpose of implementing a school improvement program. On the heels of these early efforts, any number of noteworthy programs were launched in Connecticut, Michigan, Ohio, and St. Louis, to mention only a few.

Think of the drama! During this crucial period we had a handful of researchers armed with a few descriptive studies being so bold as to assume that they could change large and seemingly intractable school districts, including New York City!

It was during this period that critics of the Effective Schools Research, and its concepts, began to organize their response.

I can't emphasize strongly enough how important the times and the timing were for this almost "grass roots" phenomenon! I believe that history will record a place for the Effective Schools Movement as a contribution to public education. I am convinced further that the Effective Schools contribution could and perhaps would have been significantly reduced if the usual "rites of passage" had been followed before taking the research to practice. If those early school districts had <u>not</u> been risk takers, we might still be wondering if Effective Schools Research could provide a basis for improving practice.

One of the dominant themes of the Effective Schools Movement has been the emphasis placed upon both quality <u>and</u> equity. This critical attribute will become even more central in the drama of school reform in the period of the early eighties.

<u>1980-1983</u>

The 1980-1983 period was critical, because it was during this time that the clouds began to gather and the excellence movement began to sweep the country like a storm. The changes in the national political scene truly fueled the excellence movement. But what was to become of the much-more modest Effective School Movement? Was it to be swept up by the excellence movement or swept aside?

Well, we cannot be completely certain, but it seems to me that the Effective Schools reform movement continues to survive, I would say, "flourish," even as the excellence movement is beginning to be relegated to yesterday's "buzzword."

If I can be so bold as to offer one explanation for this rather strange occurrence, I would offer that it is because of the fact that the Effective Schools movement offers students and educators more promise than many of the recent approaches to excellence. Effective Schools seems to offer an approach to school reform that accrues to the benefit of all students. Many of the excellence strategies, even under the best of circumstances, benefit some at the expense of others.

1983-86

The past three years have been exciting for public education. They represent a period when one could expect enduring change to occur! Social institutions, today are actually confronted with the necessity to change, and to change rapidly: visions of "how" to change effectively are within our grasp. The vision and the necessity have literally coincided.

For the Effective Schools Movement, the death of Ron Edmonds in the summer of 1983 was a jolting blow for many reasons: First, many of us lost a personal and professional friend; Second, the Movement lost a great communicator; and, Third, the Movement, much to the credit to his discerning wisdom and active involvement, had begun to be institutionalized. Consequently, just as new roles and processes were evolving, most of us involved in the research

and practice found ourselves carrying forward a workload of gigantic proportions, including both research and school improvement, while operating in what might be appropriately called, a "loose " network of collaboration. While the results have been frustrating at times, I personally believe that the Movement has been strengthened by our individual and collective struggle to assert the value of the Effective Schools Research and concepts. I believe many of us (I know I did.) found the true depth of our own commitment and ways to pursue the vision. We found the energy to go forward, propelled in no small measure by the inspiration of Ron Edmonds' work and personhood. Nothing can compensate for the loss of Ron Edmonds. We all, of course, would have much preferred that the work could have proceeded in an uninterrupted manner and with the leadership and global vision of our colleague, Ron Edmonds.

The Future:

The last decade has been personally and professionally exciting for me. I expect that the next decade will be no less demanding. and yet, exhilarating. Look at some of the prospects for the future:

1. We now can look to two new national research centers for leadership to help develop and sustain the next generation of research on the effective elementary and the effective secondary school. I want to be hopeful that these fine scholars will maintain the sense of balance between quality and equity which characterizes today's Effective Schools movement.

2. We can anticipate major new school improvement evaluation reports and case studies. Some have already emerged (and in good form) from those schools and districts where Effective Schools Research program implementation is underway.

3. We have seen progress in the developing of criteria for the Office of Education's elementary school recognition program. As you know, the criteria are currently noticably dependent upon the concept of the Effective School, as it has long been articulated by the National Council for Effective Schools, especially as espoused from the committee chaired by Professor Brookover.

4. We observe several educational institutions, including state and local agencies, as well as institutions of higher education, such as Michigan State University, offering programs designed to assist people with implementing the Effective Schools concepts.

5. We see a continuing presentation of articles in the professional literature which not only extend the Effective Schools Research, but also describe school improvement programs. In the future we can anticipate even more descriptions of Effective Schools practices that have been found to work.

6. Finally, we are experiencing a coming together of the Effective Schools and Effective Teaching Research and associated models. I appreciate the fact that local educators have helped us to understand that positive and enduring change is going to occur only if teachers, and the school

organizations in which they work, change. The prospects for the continuing integration of these parallel bodies of knowledge are promising indeed.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING BASED ON THE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH

What have we to offer the local school practitioners, when it comes to school improvement? What are the important research questions next to be addressed in the context of this model? While I am not calling for, or even suggesting, that there is only ONE model, I believe it is fair to say that most of the approaches to school improvement based on Effective Schools Research show a set of descriptions that position this approach to change somewhat apart from most other improvement models. The remainder of this address will provide a brief commentary on these characteristics, and in so doing, will highlight some of the important research questions and discussion areas which require research in the future.

As we have indicated, the Effective Schools Research has evolved to the point where it represents one of the major cornerstones in the broader school reform movement. I would like to take a few minutes to put the Effective Schools-based school improvement model, as I articulate it, under the microscope. My purpose in doing this is twofold: First, I would like to provide a basis for discussion among my Effective Schools colleagues. While I believe our perspectives would reveal a high degree of agreement, I also realize that our viewpoints do differ. A discussion can help clarify this.

Second, as I take the School Improvement model apart and describe some if its critical and distinctive attributes, I anticipate that we will uncover and give sharper focus to the numerous research questions which require investigation or further study. There is no doubt that the questions imply an expanded agenda for research--one which will assuredly offer researchers gainful employment for years to come!

I claim that when taken as a holistic model, Effective Schools-based school improvement programs represent a unique approach to school reform. I also recognize that the individual elements, when considered singularly within their own context, are recognizable as major components of several well-known and currently utilized models, or approaches, to school change.

Elements Inherent in the ESR Model

1.- Focus:

Generally, school reform projects in a school, district, or state may be classified as attempts to improve schools in relation to one of three primary missions of schools:

1) The provision of custodial care; 2) The institution's capacity to sort and select students; and 3) the school's or district's attempts to assure quality teaching and learning.

The Effective Schools Model is rather unique in that it emphasizes a primary focus on the improvement of both teaching and learning. I will resist the temptation herein (but we have written about it recently and elsewhere) to elaborate on the plentiful strategies extant which are

associated with sorting and selecting students in behalf of "excellence" and "higher standards." All too frequently the excellence movement, when implemented in anything less than the most careful manner, gravitates more and more resources to the students who are the least needful of them. Evidence is plentiful that this kind of apportionment accrues great deficits to the children of the poor and disadvantaged, and consequently to society as a whole.

I am most fortunate to have frequent opportunities to share my perspectives with educational groups across the country. I hear their concerns, as well, and find it helpful to them to make this point: Naisbitt's book, Megatrends contains many, but one especially useful image, "It is always easier to ride a horse in the direction that it is going."

School people have helped me to know what Naisbitt meant. Practitioners who struggle with the Reform mandates in the context of their own schools and districts feel the pressure to "ride the horse in the direction it's going," but research and experience rein them in. A number of school leaders have decided to take courageous risks, knowing that what goes around the track comes around the track, and that the easy ride to implementation probably won't produce anymore winners than if a "reform" wasn't implemented at all.

Permit me to suggest one means of studying the issue, at any level of aggregation. In the report, prepared by the Committee for Economic Development, the writers note that in

constant dollar terms, between 1970-1980-, there was a net increase of 12.3% in dollar expenditures for K-12 education. During the same period, in constant dollar terms, the amount of money invested in classroom instruction, including teacher salaries, declined by 8%. This indicates clearly a dramatic shift in the national mission for K-12 public schools! "Will the current reform movement," we ask, "ever take on the real job of shifting resources to the singularly vital mission of teaching and learning?"

2.- Evidence:

If the Effective School's focuses on improvements in teaching and learning, what does the model suggest ought to provide the primary evidence of school improvement? The Effective Schools model places the major emphasis on outcomes for students. Even more specifically, the model suggests that schools reduce the emphasis on standardized norm referenced tests and increase their emphasis on curricular-based, criterion referenced tests.

When schools or districts follow this suggestion, the consequences are significant and pervasive. Clearly, this issue needs careful study. From my vantage point, I observe on the horizon a demanding public's expectation that results will be reportable in outcomes. Without a doubt this pressure for documented accountability will increase.

For example, I believe history will record that U.S. public education was changed in a major way by the Chief State School Officers, when they voted to support a national testing

program, which includes a vehicle for states to compare school outcomes across states. The issues surrounding this decision, and all the ramifications of current efforts to measure and monitor student outcomes, demand aggressive study and careful consideration.

3.- Analysis of Evidence:

One of the important contributions of the Effective Schools model is the helpful and interesting way it permits professional educators to look at student outcomes. The concept of disaggregation of student outcomes is admittedly one of the unique aspects of the Effective Schools Research (ESR) change model. While most of us will quickly understand the technology of disaggregation of data; fewer of us will as quickly assimilate and comprehend the underlying philosophical basis for the technology. Implied in both the philosophical and technical aspects of this method are a wealth of important issues and crucial research questions.

The technology of disaggregation asks schools to monitor student outcomes according to major subsets of the pupil population, most especially on the basis of social class and family background. Why is this both reasonable and appropriate?

To help answer this question, let me borrow a concept from Peter Drucker. Drucker makes a distinction between two terms, efficient and effective. Drucker says that being efficient means "doing the job right." Being effective is "doing the right job."

Just what is the "right job" for schools to do?

The Effective Schools model holds to the premise that there are two coincidental components for doing the "right job: quality AND equity. Unique to this model is the spoken commitment to students in public education that the range of educational opportunity for them is inclusive, rather than exclusive. The excellence movement through specfic reform measures has rewarded certain segments of the student population with additional resources. The Effective Schools model does not permit excellence for a few to deprive the many of the essential education which is assured for all.
I, and I believe many of you, are convinced that the long-term survival of public education depends upon our insistence that issues of equity remain "first" on the agenda in any reform discourse. If the equity issue is tabled or given only lipservice, then the private school movement will gather greater breadth and momentum.

Characteristics of the Process Model for School Improvement Based on Effective Schools Research

The concepts and premises which have been discussed to this point represent elements, which when taken as a whole, delineate an indigenous set of process characteristics. Each, I reiterate, represents an area which invites research.

1. Strategic Unit for Improvement.

The Effective School Model focuses on the single school as the strategic unit for change. This does not mean

that district-level support is not needed; it simply reaffirms what we know about any complex organization. each such entity, that is, the school, cannot be ignored as the strageic unit to be involved in its own re....formation. The assumption being pressed here is that the capacity for improvement and change in any school resides in that school, now. School improvement means releasing and liberating the resident capacity.

In contrast, many reform efforts associated with the excellence movement are initiated at the state level; these are "top down" models. The Effective Schools approach is associated with "bottom up"---school-at-a-time efforts.

Focusing on the school as a starting point, reminds me how important it is for those of us involved in Effective Schools Research to embrace the concept that real school improvement will come only with local ownership and commitment, not from imposed external authority. Of course, supervision and evaluation do play a vital role in ESR school improvement efforts, but only as they assist and enhance local efforts. It is unlikely that either researchers, reformers, or any cadre of supervisors could ever make it to the "Promised Land" alone.

2.- Structure for School Based Improvement.

Can we identify the energy source for building-based school improvemnt? The leadership and energy source for building level school improvement is the school improvement team. The collaborative efforts of the principal, a

representative cross section of teachers, and frequently central office staff and parents, are vital to ESR-based school improvement. The lessons espoused by private sector management cite increased productivity when the workers (in our example, principals, teachers, staff, and the school community) are actively involved in local collaborative problem solving and decision-making.

It is ironic that the private sector is acting out their recognition that improvement in the workplace is more likely to occur in a decentralized environment, even as the education reform movement propels itself into a process of centralization.

3. Currency of School Improvement:

The process of school improvement requires the planning process to become "data driven." Critical to the model is a comprehensive needs assessment that examines current and recent past achievement of the school, the presence or absence of strengths and weaknesses of each of the characteristics of effective schools, and any other locally important data; for example, a community survey. These data will help narrow the agenda for the improvement effort by targeting those domains which emerge as most in need of improvement. The process provides, at this point, a baseline from which to measure change over time.

4. Source of Innovation for Improvement:

The Effective Schools Model requires that building teams develop their improvement goals by looking at research on effective schools and effective teaching, as well as descriptions of effective practices. For many schools this is a rather radical departure from former practices; a common option utilized by schools is the selection of improvement programs "off the rack!"

We, as researchers, must give careful scrutiny, to the ways and means by which research can be helpfully and effectively provided for, and communicated to, school practitioners. We must share a sense of the complexity of the local school improvement effort and provide research findings which are not only clear, but illuminate both the positive implications, and the limitations of those findings.

Summary

The Effective Schools Model for school improvement is empowering and enabling. Because of that fact, local school teachers and administrators, are frequently awed, at first, by the ownership of the school improvement commitment. Be that as it may, they must soon be ready to assume the professional responsibility for answering the question, "What will you, the faculty of this school, accept as evidence of school

improvement?" From my experience in working with staffs, I have found that the local educators' shared understanding of the answer to that question is the turning point. When a staff chooses as evidence those outcomes which support the concept of an Effective school, when they are willing to look at their school honestly, and when they are committed to the use of research to inform their practice, then school improvement, can, does, and will continue to occur.

References

Coleman, J.S., et al. Equality of Educational Opportunity. Was 'ngton D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 1966.

Committee for Economic Development, Research and Policy Committee. Investing in our Children. 47 Madison Avenue, New York 10022: CDN, 1985

Jencks, C.S. et al, Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America. New York: Basic Books, 1972.

Lezotte, Lawrence W. and Beverly A. Bancroft. School Improvement Based on Effective Schools Research: A Promising Approach for Economically Disadvantaged and Minority Students. Journal of Negro Education (54, 3) 1985 301-312.

Naisbitt, John. Megatrends. New York: Warner, 1982